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ABSTRACT

Vocational and language skill development of severely retarded and autistic adolescent Hispanics is a training focus at the University of Texas, El Paso. University students and parents of the handicapped are trained in the following areas: teaching grocery shopping and how to order from fast food restaurants, teaching use of public transportation; teaching vocational tasks needed for independent living; teaching the nonverbal to use language communication boards (Spanish only or Spanish and English) in order to purchase items in the community; and teaching a series of language activities in the context of the real world. Simulations and photographs are used as teaching aids, and clients are encouraged to communicate by signing, manual communication, and gesturing. Another important area is functional reading instruction which, when combined with vocational habilitation, involves teaching the client to read words that will be used in the vocational activities. Instruction may be provided in Spanish only, or a combination of English and Spanish. (SEW)

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Teaching Vocational, Functional Language and Reading Skills to the Adolescent Hispanic Severely Handicapped

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The area of addressing the vocational, functional language and reading needs of the severely handicapped has been widely neglected for the past several years, (Bellamy, 1980), (Wilcox, 1980) and (Lettick, 1981). The most neglected group of all, unfortunately, are the Hispanics who are severely retarded and who have autism.

At the University of Texas at El Paso, a special education clinic which is unique to university settings in Texas has been created to help train preservice teachers and help educate the Hispanic severely handicapped population at no cost to them. These particular Hispanic handicapped adolescents and adults come from all over the city of El Paso and surrounding areas including Juarez, Mexico, to receive services.

The programs used in the clinic are based on the research of Dr. Lou Brown, University of Wisconsin at Madison and Dr. Tom Bellamy - Barbara Wilcox and Siegfried Engelmann, University of Oregon. The clinical program concerns itself with giving specific guidelines to preservice teachers and parents of the clients who will be working to teach the adolescent and adult. The clients and parents may receive instruction in Spanish only, or a combination of English then Spanish in order to train them to do various activities of vocational emphasis or activities which are out in the community. Specifically, some of the particular activity training includes:

(1) teaching the adolescents and adults to do grocery shopping

(2) teaching the clients to order from fast food restaurants

(3) teaching the clients to use public transportation

(4) teaching the clients to do various vocational tasks that they will need to learn for independent living, for instance, sewing pillow cases for commercial use

(5) teaching the clients who are non-verbal to use language communication boards (Spanish only or Spanish and English) in order to purchase various items in the community.

(6) teaching the clients a series of language activities in context of the real world.

In order to do many of the above activities the preservice students and parents of these handicapped clients are taught how to use some very important general programming principles. For example, in teaching vocational activities, the persons working with these clients must know that there are enough general programming principles that can be associated when ordering from any fast food restaurant. For example, most fast food restaurants have push/pull doors for entering and exiting from the restaurants. If the teacher is aware of this he/she can program this important concept in the lesson before taking the client to the fast food restaurants. To facilitate the Hispanic severely handicapped and autistic in this particular activity are words push/pull are placed in Spanish. The client is made aware of each of these words during massed trials or simulations before the actual trip to the fast food restaurant.

In addition, another important technique in teaching the severely handicapped clients is tc make use of photographs to show the different foods visually. For instance, the teacher can visually show the client how to do each of the specific steps required in a particular vocational task. For example, if the client is to paint a wall and put nails in the wall in a vocational task he/she can see photographs of each of these steps. For futher reinforcement, the words are placed in Spanish and/or in English directly under each of the pictures for the client to see. Communication boards or booklets utilizing photographs are excellent for helping convey steps in training vocational or community tasks such as grocery shopping. The booklet with the words noting the particular steps can be kept and reviewed periodically with the students.

Language Training

Similarly, language training is a very important part of working with the Hispanic severely handicapped adolescent. Language training involves either nonvocal or vocal means of instruction. For nonvocal clients, the communication booklets are used. Here, the actual photograph of whatever is to be taught is shown to the client. Also, if the vocational task involves various series or steps, the client can follow the sequence of the photographs. Signing, manual communication, gesturing and pointing are also used to help the severely handicapped and au'istic clients to communicate. If the severely handicapped adolescent is already functioning in Spanish, the trainer may sign or gesture and will simultaneously communicate orally

in Spanish as he/she is teaching the client. For the client who is vocal and functioning fluently, it is important to continue vocalizing to the client in Spanish. For instance, if the client is to learn how to stack dishes in a vocational task, the trainer can state, "Ponga los trastos aquí." With many of the clients in our clinical program, it is important to point and model the activity as the words are verbalized by the teacher. In this way the client hears and sees what he/she is to do.

Further, as training continues with language development, it is important to keep the sentences or phrases to the point. For instance, Lovaas (1981) notes that when teaching severely handicapped language such as prepositions, it is important to stress the preposition first "On" or in Spanish "Sobre" then add the other parts of the phrase such as "On the floor," or "Sobre el piso."

Language training needs to be further stressed in context with adolescents. No specific time of the day or period should be set aside as the only means of giving the client or student who is Hispanic and severely handicapped instruction in language. Musselwhite and St. Louis (1982) stress in their review of effective language intervention training that it is very important to keep language training as a goal in all activities as the adolescent handicapped engages in daily activities. If the client is grocery shopping in the community, the teacher should plan simulation trials (before the actual grocery shopping is attempted.) During simulation trials the entire process of going grocery shopping is recreated in the classroom. No more than

10 to 15 minutes of simulation or massed trials should be attempted for any activity. Simulations can be done in either Spanish/English or Spanish only. Simulations help the clients or students improve their ability to do each of the steps involved in the task with greater fluency. By doing simulations the client/student gets to verbalize what he/she is going to do. Further, this procedure gives the client practice in oral communication. Questions should be asked first in the language the client or student is most comfortable in speaking first. For instance, if the client speaks mostly in Spanish, ask the client (during simulations). "Que vas a comprar?" (What are you going to buy?) Student responds - "Comprar soda". (Buy a drink.) It is not necessary for the student to answer or request material in a complete sentence.

Reading Education

A second important area that needs to be addressed for the severely handicapped Hispanic is the area of reading or functional reading instruction. For this very important area it should be noted that one should consistently ask for what functional purpose is one teaching any material to the client. If one cannot answer that question specifically, then that particular word or set of words should not be taught to the client or trainee. Once the decision has been reached, then some of the following ideas can be considered:

(1) The word/words can be shown to the client in English. For example, if the word is shown in English the trainer may

orally indicate the concept in Spanish to the client/ trainee. Also, a picture or photograph of the concept may be shown alongside the word. This will help reinforce the concept once again for the client.

(2) The word reading by the client can be increased to short phrases. Again, it is important as with other examples given to the client that the client be shown pictures or photographs to illustrate the concept. The sentences can be indicated in English and the trainer can give the concepts in Spanish to the client or trainee.

(3) As with all instruction it is important to keep track of the trainee's errors and the amount of assistance which was given to the client in English or Spanish.

Finally, when teaching reading as part of vocational habilitation, it is important to teach the client to read the words which will be used in the vocational activities or tasks. For example, if the client is to learn the word "stop," he/she can be taught to read the word in English and be given the concept orally in Spanish to further his/her understanding of the meaning of "stop."

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(6) teaching the clients a series of language activities in context of the real world.

In order to do many of the above activities the preservice students and parents of these handicapped clients are taught how to use some very important general programming principles. For example, in teaching vocational activities, the persons working with these clients must know that there are enough general programming principles that can be associated when ordering from any fast food restaurant. For example, most fast food restaurants have push/pull doors for entering and exiting from the restaurants. If the teacher is aware of this he/she can program this important concept in the lesson before taking the client to the fast food restaurants. To facilitate the Hispanic severely handicapped and autistic in this particular activity are words push/pull are placed in Spanish. The client is made aware of each of these words during massed trials or simulations before the actual trip to the fast food restaurant.

In addition, another important technique in teaching the severely handicapped clients is to make use of photographs to show the different foods visually. For instance, the teacher can visually show the client how to do each of the specific steps required in a particular vocational task. For example, if the client is to paint a wall and put nails in the wall in a vocational task he/she can see photographs of each of these steps. For futher reinforcement, the words are placed in Spanish and/or in English directly under each of the pictures for the client to see. Communication boards or booklets utilizing photographs are excellent for helping convey steps in training vocational or community tasks such as grocery shopping. The booklet with the words noting the particular steps can be kept and reviewed periodically with the students.

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